



# MUSEUM and HANDICRAFT PROGRAM

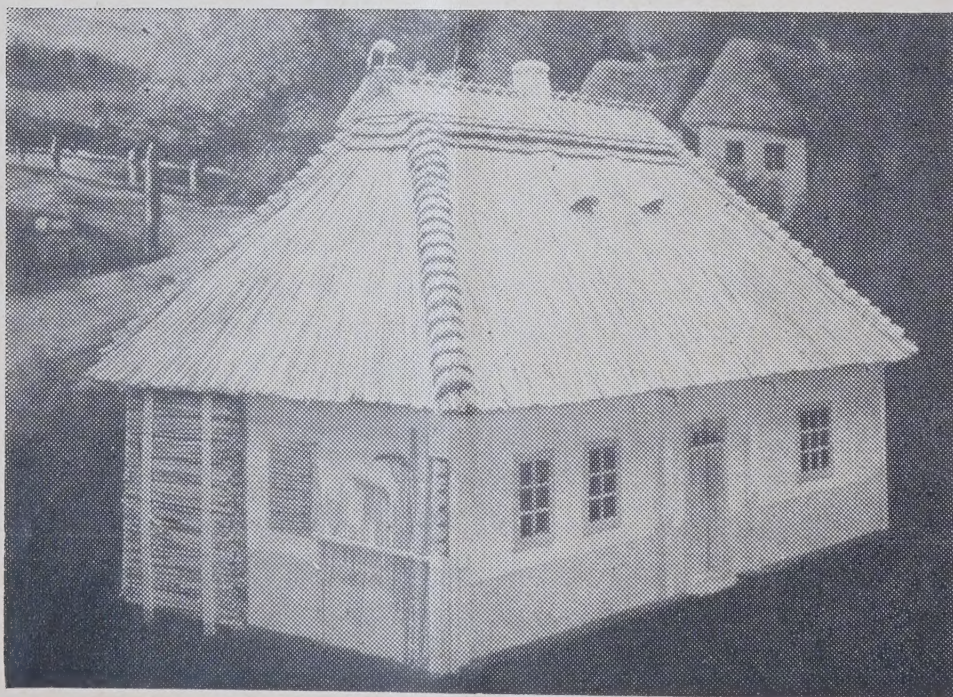


UKRAINIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION  
of  
CANADA  
1927 — 1955



*Mrs. S. Yurkiwsky*

*Published on the occasion  
of  
Saskatchewan's Golden Jubilee.*



*Miniature of a typical Ukrainian village home — Saskatoon museum.*



Most Canadians have at one time or another viewed displays of Ukrainian handicrafts, yet few are aware of the organized effort that is being made to preserve and foster these various arts and crafts. In her native land the Ukrainian woman was extremely versatile in all forms of handiwork. Necessity coupled with a creative aptitude developed this versatility to a high degree.

However on emigrating to Canada the Ukrainian woman found conditions vastly different. Quickly she tried to conform to life standards of her adopted country. There was no further need to spend long hours in embroidering, when one could buy inexpensive factory made articles which could serve as well and make her home just like that of her neighbors. With the discarding of the hand tools and primitive looms, which had served her so well in her native country, the development of skills in their use became obsolete. It became apparent that unless something was done, a great many beautiful embroideries and other crafts would become but a dim memory.

To prevent the disappearance of these arts and crafts many organizations came into being and have done splendid work in reviving an interest in various national crafts. The Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada, through its Handicrafts and Museum Committee, has made a definite contribution in this field, though with little publicity or fanfare.

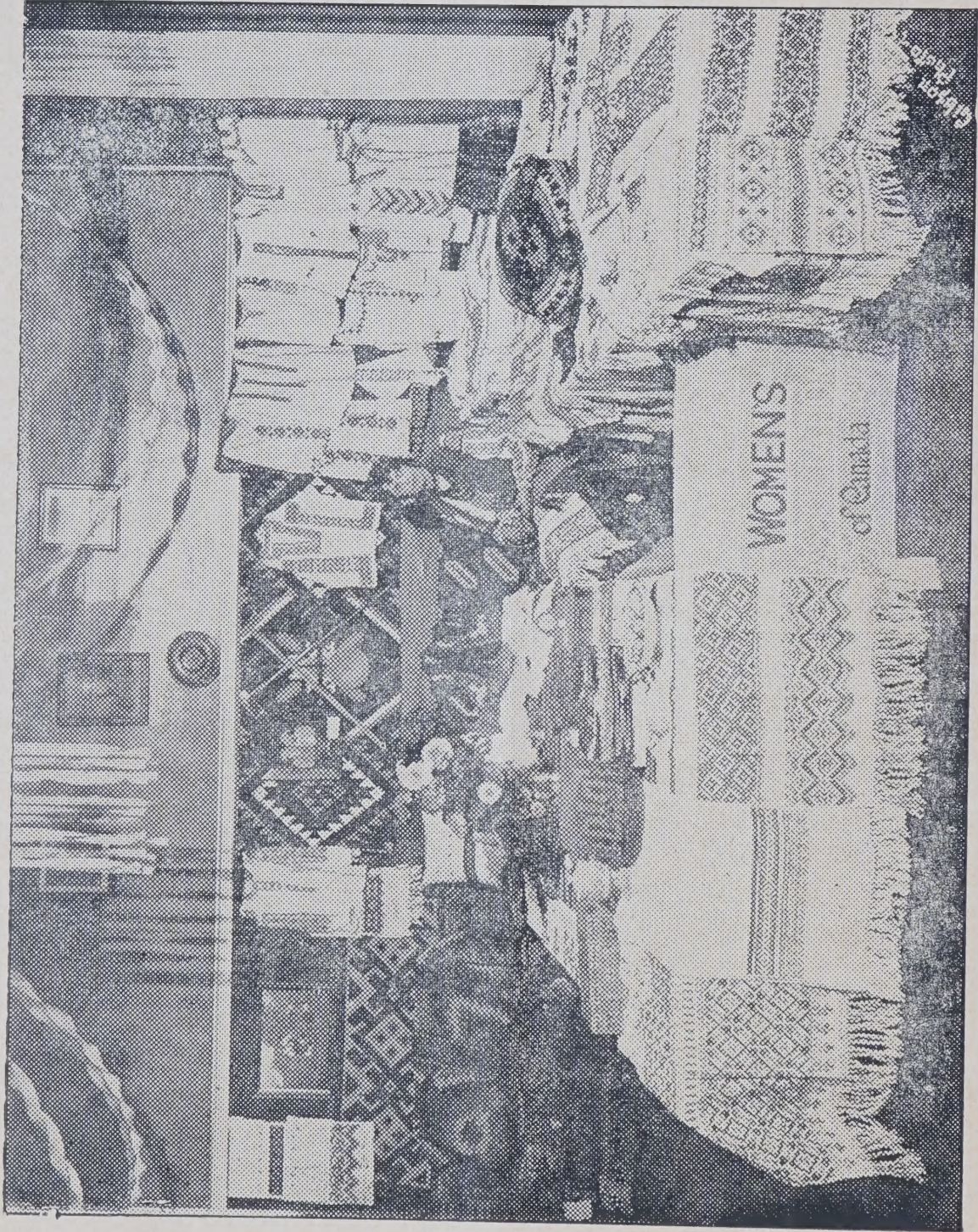
## **The Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada**

The above organization was formed in 1927 for the purpose of coordinating and directing the work of numerous Ukrainian Women's groups in Canada, and while handicrafts has a very important place in its program, it is not the main field of activity. Very valuable work has been conducted along cultural and educational lines through its committees, i. e. Adult Education, Home Economics, Mental Health, Social Welfare, Handicraft and Museum, Scholarships, Teenage Education, Citizenship, and Civil Defense. The Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada is a federate member of the National Council of Women, the Ukrainian Self-Reliance League of Canada, the United Nations, and the Canadian Association of Consumers.

The chief aim of the association is to help the Ukrainian woman to become an ideal homemaker, to encourage her to take an active interest in all matters pertaining to her community, and consequently to assist her in taking her place with other women in Canadian life.

From its modest beginning the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada has grown to national proportions, functioning in six provinces with a membership of over 5000 women and one hundred and thirty branches. Executive headquarters are located in Edmonton. The handi-





*Exhibit during National Convention in Saskatoon 1930.*



craft program is in Saskatoon. The main museum collection under the convenership of this committee is located in the P. Mohyla Ukrainian Institute, 401 Main Street, with affiliate branches in Winnipeg, Edmonton and Toronto.

## **The Aim of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada Handicraft and Museum Committee**

The work of the Handicraft and Museum Committee was instituted not only to preserve Ukrainian arts and crafts, but also to encourage the best inherent tendencies in Ukrainians. Because Ukrainians stand high among the people of Europe in creative ability it was felt that this trait should be fostered and encouraged in Canada. There was a crying need not only for an organized effort to stimulate and maintain an interest in these arts and crafts but also a need for a directing and informative agency to help maintain a high standard in those crafts which had as yet not completely vanished under modern influences. With these needs and aims in mind the Handicraft and Museum Committee launched a program which it has promoted with ever increasing zest throughout the years.

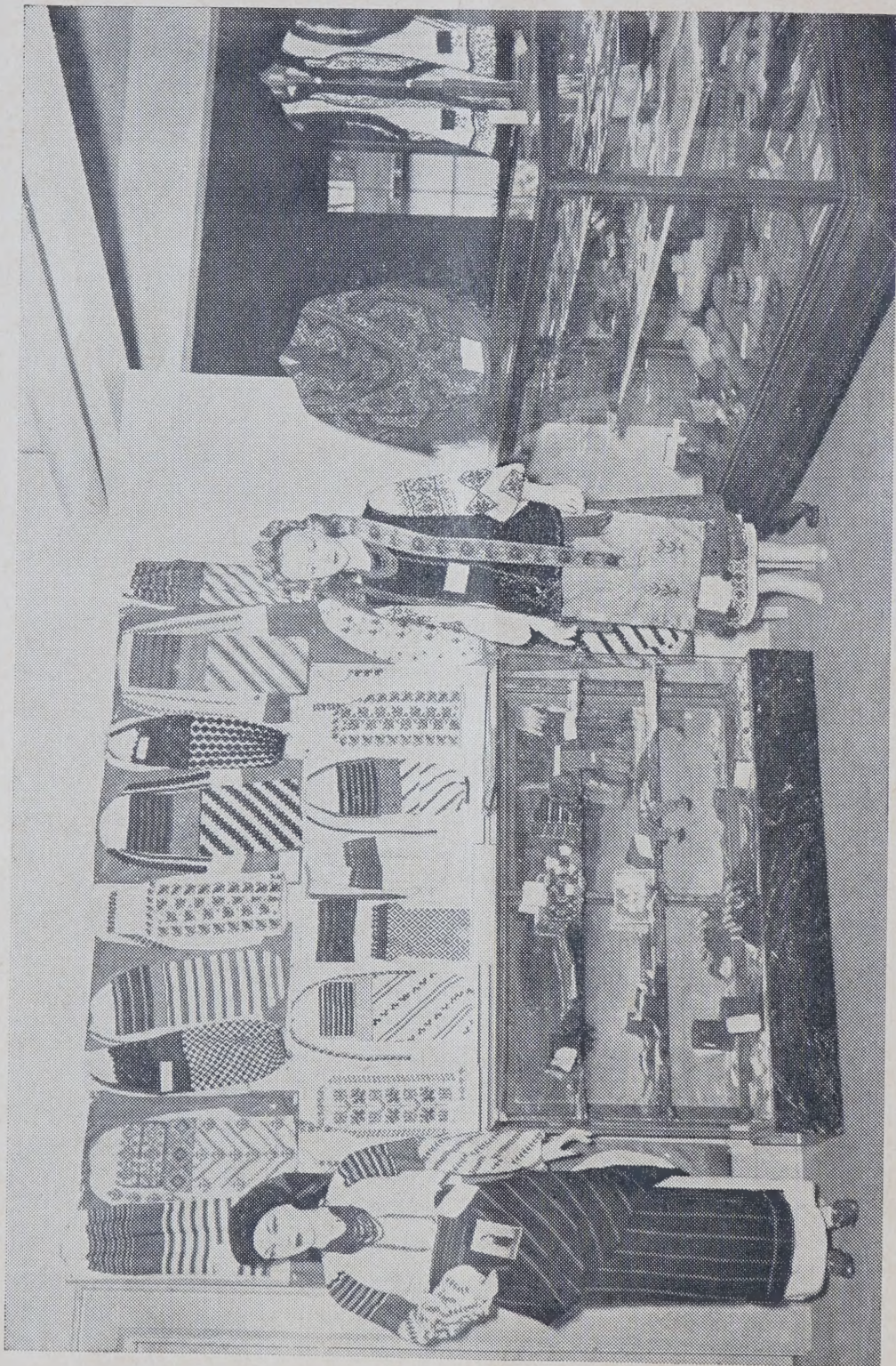
## **Exhibits and Displays**

At first the main effort of the committee was directed to the sponsoring of displays and exhibits of various Ukrainian crafts. Demonstrations in weaving, spinning, Easter egg painting, and embroidering, etc., were arranged throughout the affiliated branches of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada at conventions and in co-operation with other handicraft organizations. These displays generally featured both old and new articles and showed the numerous possibilities of adaptation of Ukrainian crafts to modern home beautification and apparel.

## **Embroidery Projects**

Though the Ukrainians cross stitch embroideries are well known in Canada, there are other Ukrainian embroideries which show originality and beauty and are fine samples of the infinite patience and rich cultural heritage of the Ukrainian people. In this category are the Hutzul and Bukovinian nyzynka embroideries, the drawn thread work of Central Ukraine, the colorful slant stitch embroideries of Yavoriv and many others. To encourage the use of these various techniques common to Ukrainian embroidery, projects and contests were conducted in which all branches of affiliated societies participated. In one such project during the war years, embroidered articles were sold and proceeds were donated to the Red Cross.





*A small portion of a large exhibit of museum articles displayed during the U.W.A.C. 25th anniversary convention in Winnipeg 1952.*



## **Pamphlets and Publications**

To assist members participating in projects, instructions and informative materials concerning various embroidery techniques were prepared and distributed in pamphlet form. Illustrated mimeographed bulletins showing ways of adopting Ukrainian embroideries to household use and for modern apparel were published. The association has published a fine book about Ukrainian embroideries. At present the Handicraft and Museum Committee is preparing material in the English language for a book of patterns and embroideries. This book will feature traditional design and give practical suggestions how to adapt these patterns to beautify homes, churches, and institutions.

## **Women's Page in the "Ukrainian Voice"**

Through the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada women's page in the "Ukrainian Voice", a weekly newspaper, the committee has continually supplied Ukrainian women with information concerning all phases of its work and with various embroidery patterns. This page has proved very worthwhile as it is read by many women who are not members of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada.

## **The National Costume**

The Ukrainian national costume has won popularity in Canada. However, some of these costumes seen on the concert stage are not always authentic. Some have been created especially to dazzle the eyes of the audience but with little thought to authenticity or appealing color arrangement. Thus one may sometimes see a Bukovinian blouse, an apron from Podillya and a skirt of Poltava combined and worn together. The result, though picturesque enough, is but a caricature of the traditional Ukrainian costume and does not truly portray its colorful but quiet simplicity.

The Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada has endeavoured to remedy the above situation by advocating the acceptance of one typical regional costume and has selected the costume of Poltava as it features the most typical characteristics of the various regional costumes and is also the most popular in Canada. Suitable material on this subject has been prepared and distributed throughout the branches and also to Ukrainian youth organizations. An effort is also made to acquaint members with characteristic features of each regional costume and to further this objective, costume reviews were held at a number of annual conventions.



## Weaving

Formerly, practically every item of the national costume in the Ukraine was handwoven. No young lady was considered eligible for marriage unless she had woven and embroidered enough linen to last her for many years.

With the coming of the machine age, manufactured products began to appear even in the most isolated Ukrainian villages and consequently the national costume began to include factory made materials. The colorful woollen plachtas (wrap-around skirts) and apron were replaced by manufactured cotton and cashmir skirts. The handwoven linen or woollen



*Typical Ukrainian Hutzul folk dress.*



head dress (peramytko) was exchanged for imported head shawls of silk or cashmir.

The modern handicraft movement has awakened an interest in all things of the past and handwoven articles are again coming into their own, not only in Europe, but also in Canada. There are many Ukrainians in Canada who have not forgotten how to weave. Knowing that Ukrainians can make a definite contribution in this field, the Handicraft and Museum Committee is endeavouring by various means to reawaken an interest in this craft.

Articles on weaving and its possible uses in Canada have been prepared. The older women are urged to pass their knowledge on to the younger generation. The committee has also carried on a vigorous effort to collect all types of weaving of museum or interest value. In time, it hopes to have a collection which will be a source of help and inspiration to all those who are interested in adapting to modern use the typical techniques and coloring found in traditional Ukrainian weaving.

## **Easter Eggs**

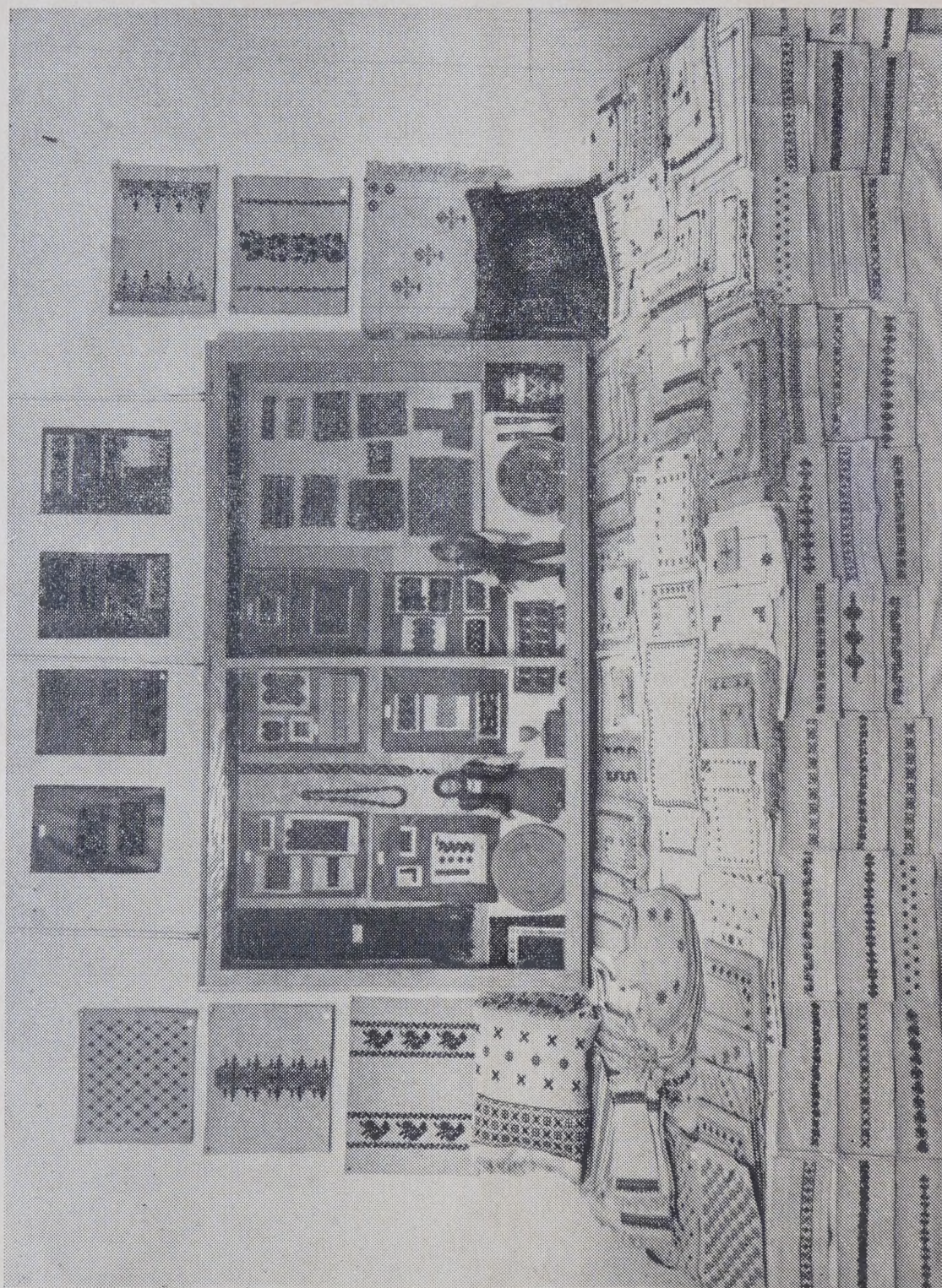
The making of Easter eggs has been encouraged for many years. It is because of this effort that this age-old craft has survived in Canada. Of notable interest is the fact that many young Canadian born Ukrainian girls and women have surpassed the artistic standards of Easter egg designing and coloring attained in the Ukraine where this craft has been carried on for centuries.

Each year, during the Lenten period, special classes in this art are conducted by the affiliated branches. The main difficulty in promoting this work has been the scarcity of suitable traditional patterns, so the committee has directed its efforts mainly to discovering and supplying branches with typical patterns common to this craft, as well as instructions as to dyes and procedure involved.

## **Museum of Ukrainian Arts and Crafts**

To further stimulate an interest in Ukrainian arts and crafts and to preserve for future generations old embroidery patterns, the vanishing peasant costumes and crafts, the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada for years has carried on a concerted effort to collect all forms of Ukrainian handicrafts. The endeavour in this regard has been remarkably successful. The main Museum, which was officially opened in 1940, has now thousands of embroidery samples, old and new, hundreds of various items of the national costumes, as well as numerous samples of typical Ukrainian arts and crafts, books, periodicals, etc.



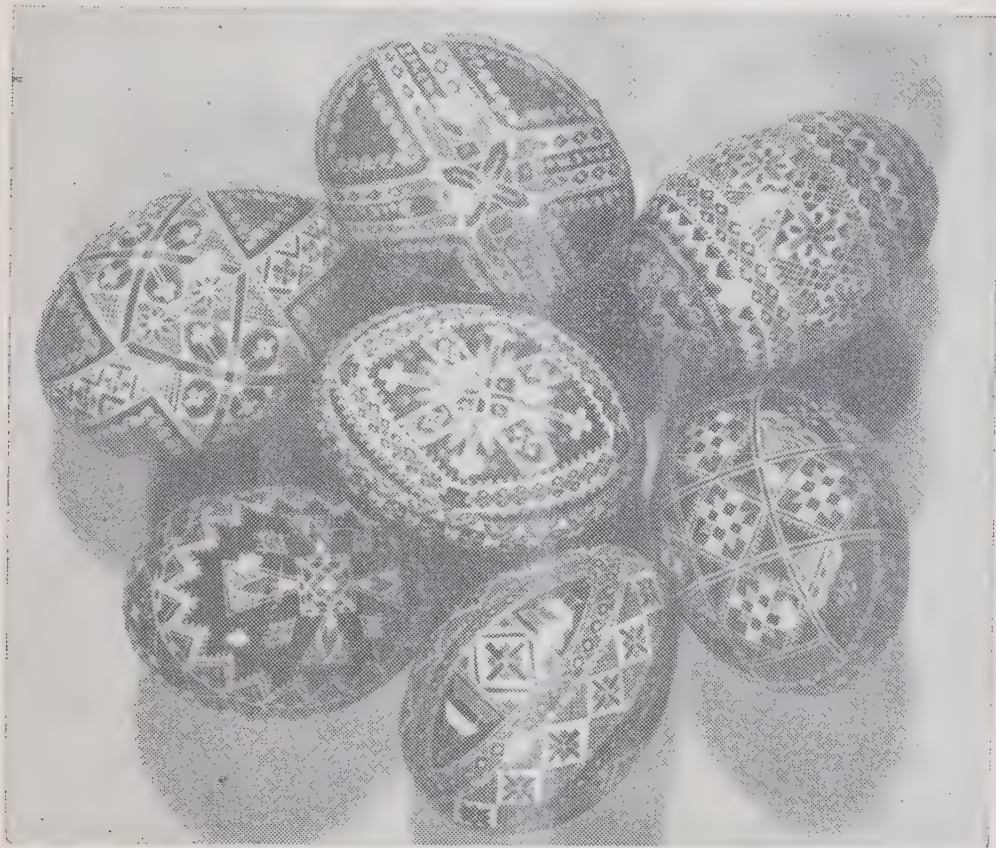


*Articles embroidered by members of the U.W.A.C. in aid of Red Cross project in 1943.*



## Museum Branches

The Museum branches in Toronto, Edmonton and Winnipeg organized between 1944 and 1950 to extend and to intensify the work, also have fine collections of representative crafts. Museum branches co-operate with the National Museum Committee in various joint projects. Marvellous work has been done in promoting an interest in handicrafts and in the museum collections in those centres where museum branches are located.

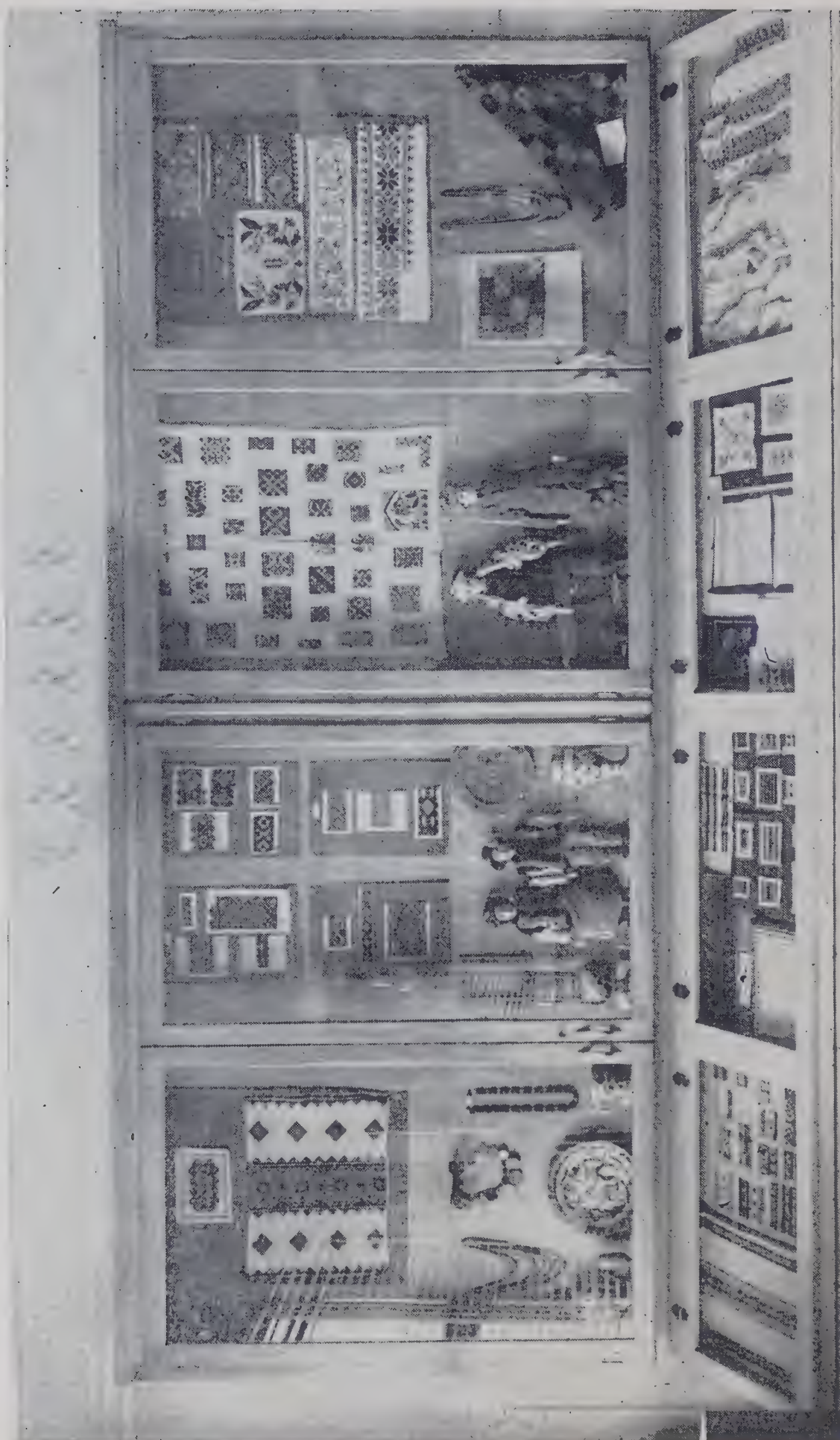


*Ukrainian Easter Eggs (Pysanky).*

## Museum Collection. Itemized

- 1) Embroidered patterns old and new, in various techniques, over 2,000.
- 2) Many albums of printed embroidery patterns.
- 3) Many complete regional costumes.
- 4) Hundreds of various items of the national costume.
- 5) Samples of weaving-kilims (wall and floor coverings), bench covers, bags and various household articles, etc.
- 6) Large model in miniature of a typical Ukrainian peasant house with furnishings and some equipment for out-of-door work.
- 7) Replica of a Ukrainian loom weaving and equipment for spinning.
- 8) Over 200 Easter eggs, old and new patterns.
- 9) Samples of Ukrainian wood carvings and ceramics.
- 10) Over 200 finished embroidered modern household articles and





*Display cases in museum 1951.*



- wearing apparel such as centerpieces, cushions, towels, bags, purses, etc.
- 11) Some handmade household equipment made and used by pioneer Ukrainian settlers.
  - 12) Printed matter concerning Ukrainian arts and crafts.
  - 13) Old books, periodicals, journals — over 600 entries.
  - 14) Colored transparencies of regional costumes, embroideries, Easter eggs, etc.

## **Embroidery Pattern Service**

Branches of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada can borrow, free of charge, patterns and designs from the museum collection. Because each year many branches avail themselves of this lending service, there has been a rapid expansion in the use of traditional designs and techniques, as well as a marked improvement in the standard of articles embroidered by members of the association throughout Canada.

The branches in turn have collected various patterns popular in their localities. These have been added to the museum collection and loaned out if they meet with standard requirements set by the museum committee.

## **Travelling Exhibit**

Available to branches of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada is a collection of approximately 200 finished embroidered articles consisting of towels, runners, doilies, pincushions, bags, etc. These articles are choice pieces selected out of hundreds of articles embroidered by members of the association during several projects conducted by the Handicraft and Museum Committee.

Upon request from the branches, the committee sends with the travelling display other samples of Ukrainian handicrafts.

## **Services Available to the Public**

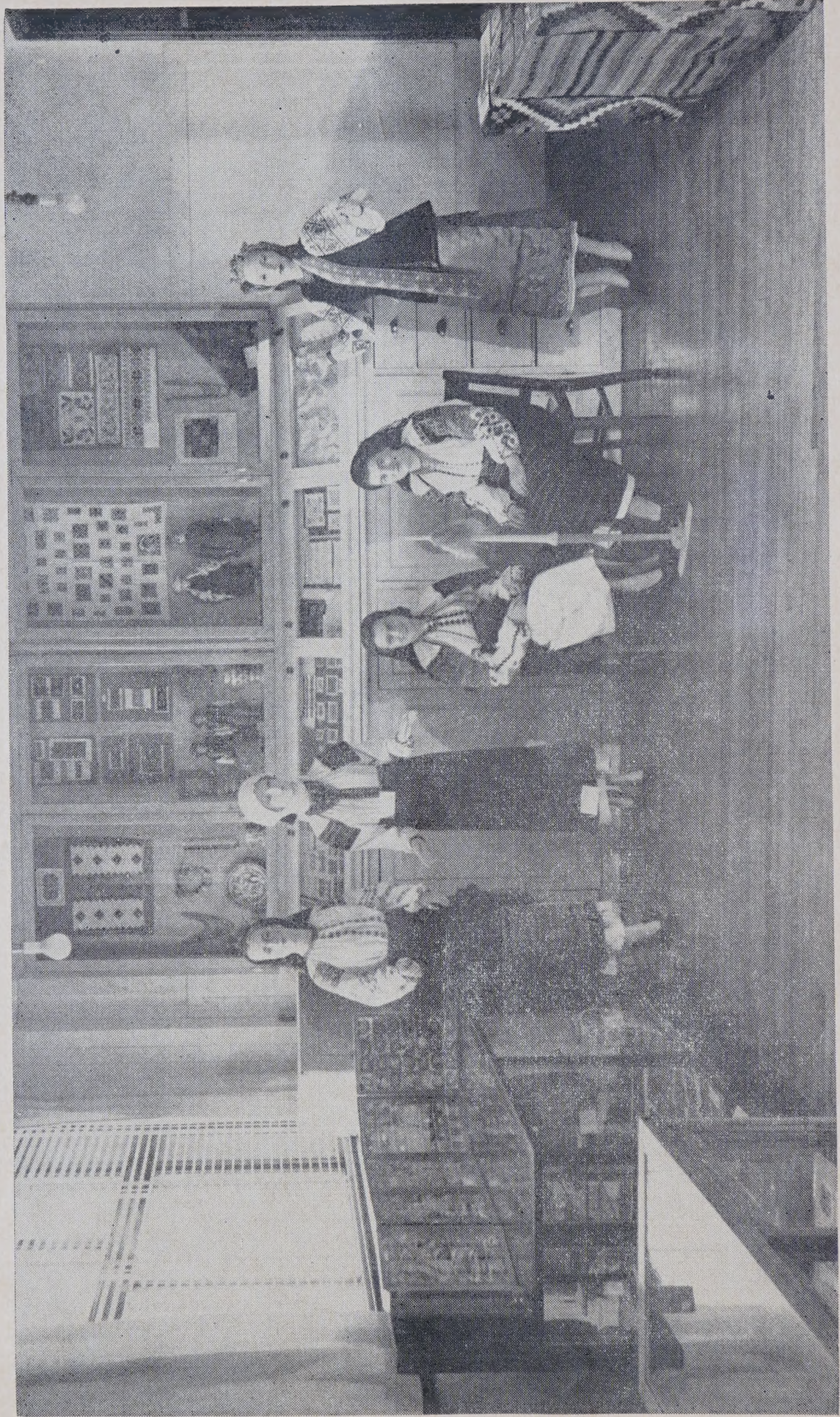
The committee has loaned various articles from its collection for exhibits and displays to the Canadian Handicraft Guild, to various other handicraft clubs, and to Women's organizations. It has assisted other handicraft organizations in promoting interest in all types of handicraft work.

The Museum is open to the public. Many people attending conventions in Saskatoon have availed themselves of the opportunity to view this unique collection.

## **Who Supports the Museum?**

It is gratifying to note that the majority of the articles in the Central Museum and in its branches have been donated by members of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada. Only a few articles have been purchased, some in the Ukraine before the last war. The P. Mohyla





*A view of museum room in Saskatoon 1951.*



Institute provides the space for the exhibition of the main museum collection, provides necessary repairs and decoration of the room, light and heating facilities, etc., all free of charge. The girls' organization "Mohylanki" comprised of student girls in this institution has from time to time donated funds for necessary equipment. Branches of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada donate from \$3 to \$5 yearly to the Museum Fund, which is used for minor operating expenditures. Members of the Handicraft and Museum Committee keep the records of the main museum and of the branches and voluntarily contribute their time to all matters pertaining to the museum.

## Is the Museum Important?

During the war years the Nazis and Communists in Europe destroyed a great many Ukrainian museums. Large and priceless collections of Ukrainian arts and crafts were lost. In the Ukraine, under Soviet rule, the folk culture of the Ukrainian people is ruthlessly discouraged, destroyed and appropriated. Many Ukrainian refugees maintain that the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada museum has costumes from districts of the Ukraine, where at the present time, the costume has completely vanished, and that its collection of Bukovinian handicrafts surpasses any other collection of its kind. Because of existing conditions in Europe the effort to build up museum collections in Canada is undoubtedly of extreme significance and importance.

## Future Plans

Though the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada has accomplished a great deal up to the present time, there yet remains much to be done. There are many young people who are not acquainted with the various Ukrainian handicrafts and future plans must include an intensification of work among teenagers. There are still many valuable items to be found hidden in homes and serving no useful purpose. Also many refugees from behind the Iron Curtain have brought with them fine collections of embroideries and weavings. The Handicraft and Museum Committee has plans to extend its campaign drive and to expand its museum collection to include books, paintings, glass ware, church vestments, coloured slides, etc.

In time it hopes to build up a museum of Ukrainian cultural treasures which will be a continual source of stimulus and inspiration to further creative effort in Canada.

*Mrs. Rose Dragan.*

(Chairman of the Handicraft and Museum Committee.)

April, 1955.



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